Be a flaming success!

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By G.L. SILVERMAN

To bring in the New Year right, nothing could be better than crepes ... word is loaded with glamour ar... a gala party.

The glamour come...pes Suzette, beautiful ...n a darkened room a... eat.

The myth is ... it is simply not tru... plicated to make and ...ly by experienced co... make (all it takes is ...nd with the batter) a... to deal with.

They r... time and stored in the ..., and enclosed in foil o... pieces of waxed pap...

F... re quick. Crepes take a... oake. so, although they ...y, a whole stack of them ...a very short time.

...one, they can be served for any m... r cold, with a vast variety of fillings and ...uces, savory or sweet.

Basic Crepe Rules

There may be as many recipes for the pancake part of a crepe dish as there are cookbooks. However, crepes are nothing but very thin pancakes, after all, and it's hard to hurt them once you get the consistency of the batter right. This may take a few initiatory tries with your batch of batter—which will take only a few minutes and is rather fun.

Some cooks say the batter should be the consistency of heavy cream. Melt a bit of butter in a small crepe pan (T-Fal or Teflon is perfect, but cast iron works beautifully), a 7-inch pan is classic. Pour a scant ¼ cup of batter into the pan and tilt to coat the bottom. Pour off excess (don't worry about the "lip" this creates; you will trim it off or fold it in) and cook over medium high heat until golden. Turn and bake about 30 seconds.

If the batter makes too thick a crepe, add a bit more milk. The pancake should slide out of the pan quite easily.

Try one of the following recipes.

Crepe Number One

INGREDIENTS: 1 C flour; 3 well-beaten eggs; 1½ C milk; ½ t salt; 1 T oil or melted butter. METHOD: Sift flour and salt, add milk and eggs. Beat all together very well. Figure 1 t butter melted in the pan to cook each pancake.

Crepe Number Two

INGREDIENTS: 1 C milk; 1 egg; ¼ t salt; two-thirds C flour; 1 T butter melted in the crepe pan. METHOD: Beat all ingredients except melted butter together or whir them in a blender. Then beat the butter into the batter. To cook, pour a scant ¼ C of batter into the pan and bake as directed. Makes 8 crepes.

Crepe Number Three

INGREDIENTS: 2 eggs; 1½ C water or 1¼ C milk; ¼ t salt; three-fourths C flour; 1 T margarine. METHOD: Beat all ingredients until smooth. Let stand 20 minutes and stir ensuing foam slowly into batter. Heat a pan and brush sides and bottom with margarine for the first crepe; you may not have to use additional margarine for cooking. Pour on a small amount of batter, rotating the pan quickly to spread batter thinly and evenly over the bottom of the pan. Pour off excess.

Now for the fillings and sauces, and do let your imagination run wild in inventing your own combinations. Remember one easy trick: make up a thick white or cream sauce, add some chopped leftover meat or poultry to half of it, season all of it highly, then fill crepes with the meat half of the sauce and pour the other half over. Sprinkle a layer of grated good cheese on top and bake in a shallow casserole, uncovered, at 350 for about 35 minutes.

Monterry Crepes

INGREDIENTS: 1 large onion, chopped; ¼ pound mushrooms, sliced; 1 medium clove garlic, minced; 3 T butter; three-fourths t salt; 2 10 oz. pkgs. frozen chopped spinach; one-eighth t pepper; ¼ t marjoram; crepes; 1 pint sour cream; three-fourths lb. grated jack cheese; minced parsley.

METHOD: Saute onions, mushrooms and garlic in butter until tender. Thaw and drain spinach, squeezing very dry. Combine spinach, salt, pepper and marjoram with onion mixture. Spread crepes (try using Crepe Number Two) on counter and divide spinach mixture into centers. Fold in sides of each crepe and roll crepe around filling. Place seamside down in baking dish or platter. Season sour cream with a little additional salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon over crepe rolls. Sprinkle with cheese and parsley. Bake uncovered in 350 oven 35 minutes, or until hot through and light golden on top. Using Crepe Number Two quantity, this recipe serves four.

Crepes a la Russe

The authentic Russian version is based on a raised pancake made with buckwheat flour. But the preceding crepes work beautifully. These are elegant served as an appetizer or a canape.

They may be stacked on a hot plate and forked onto individual plates as they are wanted, then the spread spooned over. Spreading them more thinly, the crepes may be served already rolled.

Just as elegantly, they may be treated like any cracker-and-cheese spread party tiem; put out a napkin-lined basket of crepes plus a separate bowl of spread and let guests smear their own.

SPREAD NUMBER ONE: Lightly stir in as much red caviar as you can afford into a pint of commercial sour cream. A few drops of onion juice may be added if desired.

SPREAD NUMBER TWO: If rolling ahead of time, place a "strip" of black caviar one-third of the way up each crepe. Sprinkle lightly with very finely minced onion and hard-boiled egg. Add a couple drops of lemon juice. This is somewhat more economical than letting guests help themselves, especially if they're caviar lovers. But those flattish jars of lumpfish caviar aren't too expensive. Such caviar may be dyed black (yes, they do that) but it tastes just fine.

This dish is a visual poem when the eggs and yolks are chopped separately and ringed coencentrically with chopped onion over the crepes. Presented on a lacy paper-doily-covered platter, they are the height of something to do, especially served for a New Year's Day brunch with liqueur glasses of icy-cold vodka.

Crepes Suzette

The French-American chef Henri Charpentier built his reputation on this dish, which is said to have been created by the same sort of accident that produced other culinary masterpieces.

At the age of 14, Charpentier was cooking for Albert, Prince of Wales. One evening, his complicated crepes sauce caught fire and there was no time to begin it again. Frantic, he tasted the sauce and was astonished to find it delicious. So he plunged the crepes into the boiling liquid, added more liqueurs and let the sauce flame up again.

Since that day, restaurants have been setting fire to their desert pancakes and charging small fortunes for the result.

Anyone with a chafing dish can create similar dramatic and delicious results. Here's how: in a chafing dish dissolve three lumps of sugar in one teaspoon of water. Add the grated rind of one orange (none of the white part, please), a piece of unsalted butter the size of a walnut, and about 1½ ounces of Grand Marnier. Heat quickly, pour over hot rolled crepes, set aflame, and serve.

Desert Crepes

The simplist way to serve crepes for desert is to take a lesson from the Hungarians who spread them with jam or jelly, roll them up, and sprinkle powdered sugar over the top. Obviously, the more lucious the preserves, the better the dish.

Another easy way is to make up a batch of crepes in a larger skillet, quickly fill each with vanilla ice cream and sweetened fresh or thawed frozen berries, fold over the edges to meet at the top, and slather the lot with whipped cream.

Or sprinkle flat crepes with shaved almonds browned in butter, add a big spoon of chocolate ice cream, fold up, sprinkle each with a tablespoon of creme de cacao, and finish off with a dollop of whipped cream and another dusting of nuts.

Crepes may also be spread with applesauce and stacked or eaten out of hand. Or cook thinly sliced apples with brown sugar and a generous lump of butter for the filling, or...or...or...

But your mind is doubtless racing with your own ideas by now, so go to it and Happy New Year!